

Reporting by Session Note-takers at the 2019 Annual Consultations with NGOs

Date:	5 July, 11.00 – 12.30, room 5/6
Session Title:	Broadening the base of support: Cities and Local Authorities
Moderator:	Brett Moore, Chief of Section, Shelter and Settlements, UNHCR Speakers: Seki Hirano, Global Senior Technical Advisor, Shelter and Settlements, Catholic Relief Services, Vittoria Zanusso, Senior Manager, 100 Resilient Cities, Rockefeller Foundation, Luca Pupulin, Executive Director, IMPACT Initiatives, Dr Dionysia Lambiri, Athens
UNHCR focal point:	
NGO focal point:	
Major points arising from speakers and discussions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The experience of a multi-stakeholder initiative in Athens, using a bottom up participatory approach provided a space where the city representatives and service providers could meet and develop synergies with NGOs, IOs, service providers and community organizations. What started as a small project has been recognized as best practice at national and regional levels. • Important for the humanitarian actors to engage with the urban authorities, from the needs assessment and planning stage to the implementation, and take time to understand each other and to sympathise with each other's constituencies; refugees and host communities in order to avoid parallel systems and social tension. • Challenges in communication: the different language used by humanitarian actors (technical and full of abbreviations) and city representatives can be an obstacle to effective collaboration. • Short-term and project-based funding remain key challenge to sustain successful initiatives as the capacity of local authorities, often already under-resourced, struggles to continue to meet increased needs with less resources. • For big Western cities, mass-migration can be a challenge but also a resilience opportunity to rethink and invest in urban social housing, taking in environmental aspects, explore new ways of co-housing – cities can use one entry point to act on other stress factors such as collaboration with banks to access unbanked people. 	
Recommendations/Conclusions/Decisions on the way forward	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Important to strengthen support to middle sized/secondary cities, often overlooked in the humanitarian response that focuses on the main cities. Ensure to engage with both formal and informal community structures and build upon and complement existing structures. • Humanitarian agencies must be more flexible and able to respond the requests from cities, and reform systems and institutions to ensure these are agile and nimble to respond to needs of cities in times of crisis. 	

- National delegations should strive to involve majors and representatives from city councils to a higher extent – controversial, at least brief them before and after meetings. HC could engage with governments on this idea of bringing in local governments and city councils.

Top two quotes from the session:

- It's good that cities steal ideas from each other – and in that way share best practices on how to tackle urban crises.
- When engaging with city officials can, the use of difficult and technical language can become an obstacle.

Any general points regarding UNHCR-NGO partnerships

The GRF was mentioned as a first step where to share best practices in urban areas and to inspire other cities, and to also include actors from the Private Sector in tackling urban crises.